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Later Developments in Iowa

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Later Developments in Iowa

The firm growth of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Iowa is traceable to three principal instrumental forces, namely, the individual work of the pastor acting as a missionary, the devoted application of the women's groups, and the general church boards. Much of the time the ministers were "on their own," although some aid came from Europe and some was donated by the American Home Missionary Society.

Milestones along the way toward a fully organized home mission program were the founding by the *Evangelischer Kirchenverein* of the seminary at Marthasville, Missouri, in 1850, and the opening of Mission House in 1862 by the German Reformed in Wisconsin. The Evangelical Board for Home Missions was created in 1872. For the Reformed, the General Synod made provision for home missions at its formation in 1863, when the tercentenary of the *Heidelberg Catechism* was also observed. In his "The Westward Expansion of the Reformed Church," the Rev. Theodore P. Bolliger, general superintendent, has shown the large increment to the Church resulting from a well operated program of home missions. Largely by this means, the German Reformed in Iowa rose

to thirty-five congregations by 1926. Much of the credit belongs to the women of the churches, who notably financed this work.

The Evangelicals

The Rev. Theodor H. Dresel, a Westphalian, led off for the *Kirchenverein*, as official *Reiseprediger* or circuit rider, in October, 1854. Setting out with a horse, saddle-bags, and other equipment, Dresel passed through Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. He frequently encountered "vicious opposition . . . sometimes resulting in physical violence," according to Professor Carl E. Schneider. At German settlements in or near Sigourney, however, Dresel made explorations of great value. He was followed by the Rev. Karl Hoffmeister, a Lippe-Detmolder, who visited Iowa in 1855. Some of the people were against him, some for him. Inspired by a journey in a stagecoach, the following bit of verse shows Hoffmeister's spirit:

Schwer und wichtig ist das Werk,
Das du, Herr, uns übergeben.
Darum lass uns deine Stark',
Deine Gnad' uns stets umgeben,
Und erfüll' an uns dein Wort:
Ich bin bei euch fort und fort.

Thus, Iowa became the first home mission field to be "methodically cultivated" by the German Church Society of the West.

Another important figure for Iowa Evangelicals was the Rev. Johann Jakob Schwarz, pastor of the

Zion Church of Lowden from 1877 to 1892. Born in Riesbach, a suburb of Zürich, Switzerland, Schwarz was confirmed at sixteen in the Cathedral church where the mighty Zwingli had preached over three hundred years before. Schwarz was trained at Basel, worked in Asia Minor for a German business firm, came to America in 1873, went for a visit to the brethren at St. Louis, and finally settled as a pastor at Burksville in southern Illinois, whence he journeyed to Iowa.

To the delight of his Lowden parishioners, Pastor Schwarz instituted the Christmas tree celebration in the church. He then held a mission festival, giving ten dollars himself which his people increased to thirty. But the two saloons took in four times that much the same day. Schwarz went from house to house also, taking subscriptions for the denominational publications — *Der Friedensbote* and the *Evangelischer Kalender* — so that his flock might have proper reading matter. Drinking among his own members was the worst evil the pastor faced. He often had to be doctor as well as preacher in Lowden. In 1884 he was made president of District 5, with over a hundred churches to care for, and he often helped in founding or supplying the pulpit of other churches than his own. Those at Tipton, Clarence, and Bennett owe much to the labors of Pastor Schwarz.

One of the great men of the German Reformed Church was the Rev. Dewalt S. Fouse, who came

as pastor to Boulder, Iowa, in 1867. After five years, he removed to Lisbon. Fouse was a native of Pennsylvania, though born of strictly German stock. While a student at Franklin & Marshall College, he answered Lincoln's call for volunteers, and served at Fair Oaks, Malvern Hill, Antietam, Gettysburg, and other battles with the Second Army Corps — without receiving an injury. He was graduated from the Mercersburg Seminary the same year that he came to Iowa. His ministry was one of forty-five years.

In 1889 Fouse became General Superintendent of the Board of Home Missions, his field being the entire region west of the Alleghenies. Traveling constantly and away from home most of the time, he served with great distinction until his retirement in 1909. He encouraged many a disheartened congregation and pastor to renewed hope and energy.

Fouse continued to preach at Lisbon and Tipton right up to his death in 1912. It has been said that even his brethren called him "Pappy Fouse" — no misnomer. He frequently wrote for the *Reformed Church Herald*, published at Tipton early in this century. One of his own brethren said of him in 1912: "When the history of the Reformed Church in the West is written, Dr. D. S. Fouse will, of necessity, have the prominent place."

Iowa Evangelicals had always been identified with the *Kirchenverein des Westens*. The Society assumed the name of German Evangelical Synod

MAKERS OF THE REFORMED TRADITION



Zacharias Ursinus
(1534-1583)
Heidelberg



Ulrich Zwingli
(1484-1531)
Zürich



Caspar Olevianus
(1535-1587)
Heidelberg

BUILDERS OF THE FAITH IN AMERICA



Joseph Rieger
(1811-1869)
Burlington, Iowa

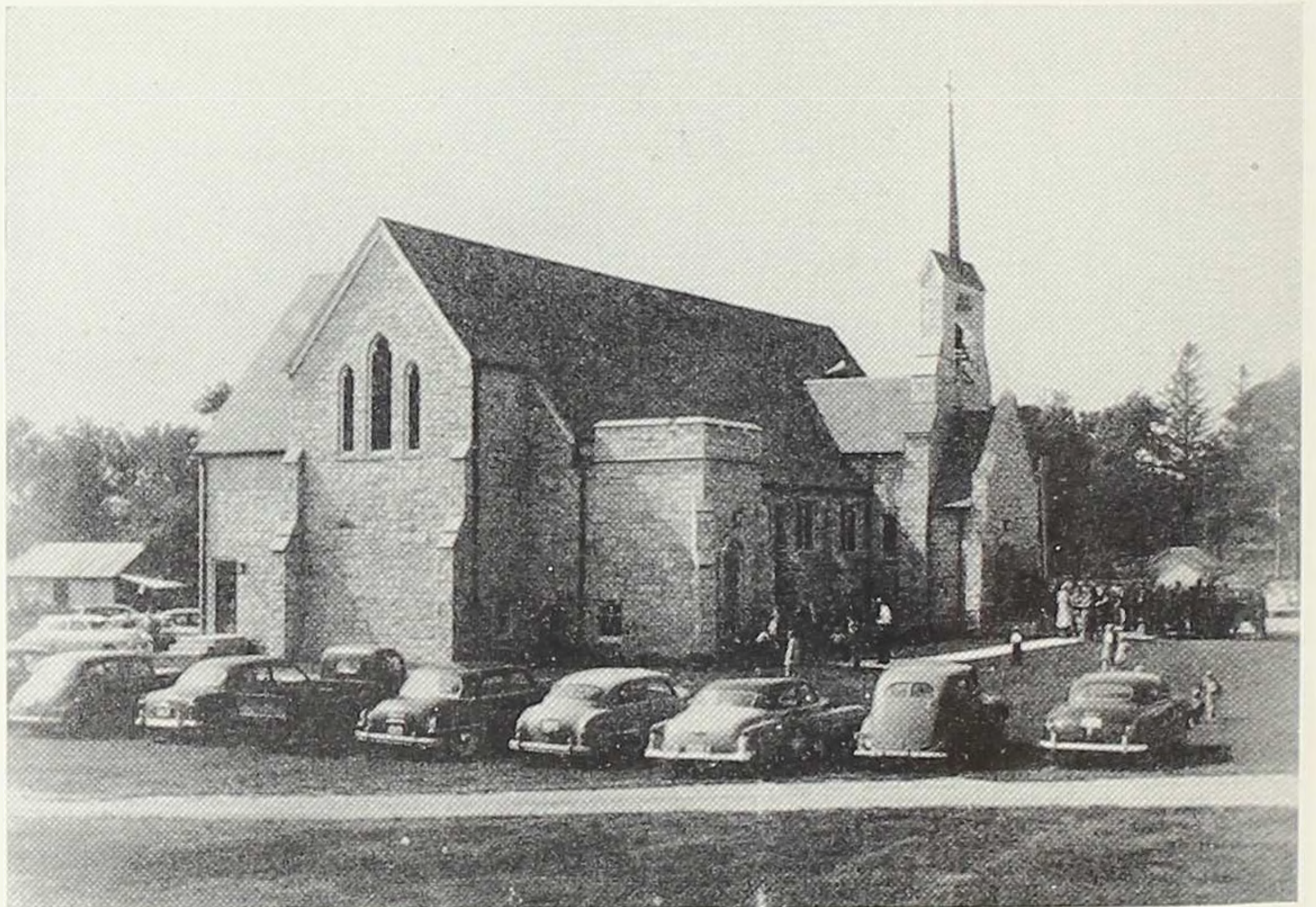


Michael Schlatter
(1718-1790)
Pennsylvania



F. C. Bauman
(1826-1909)
Zwingle, Iowa

SOME IOWA CHURCHES

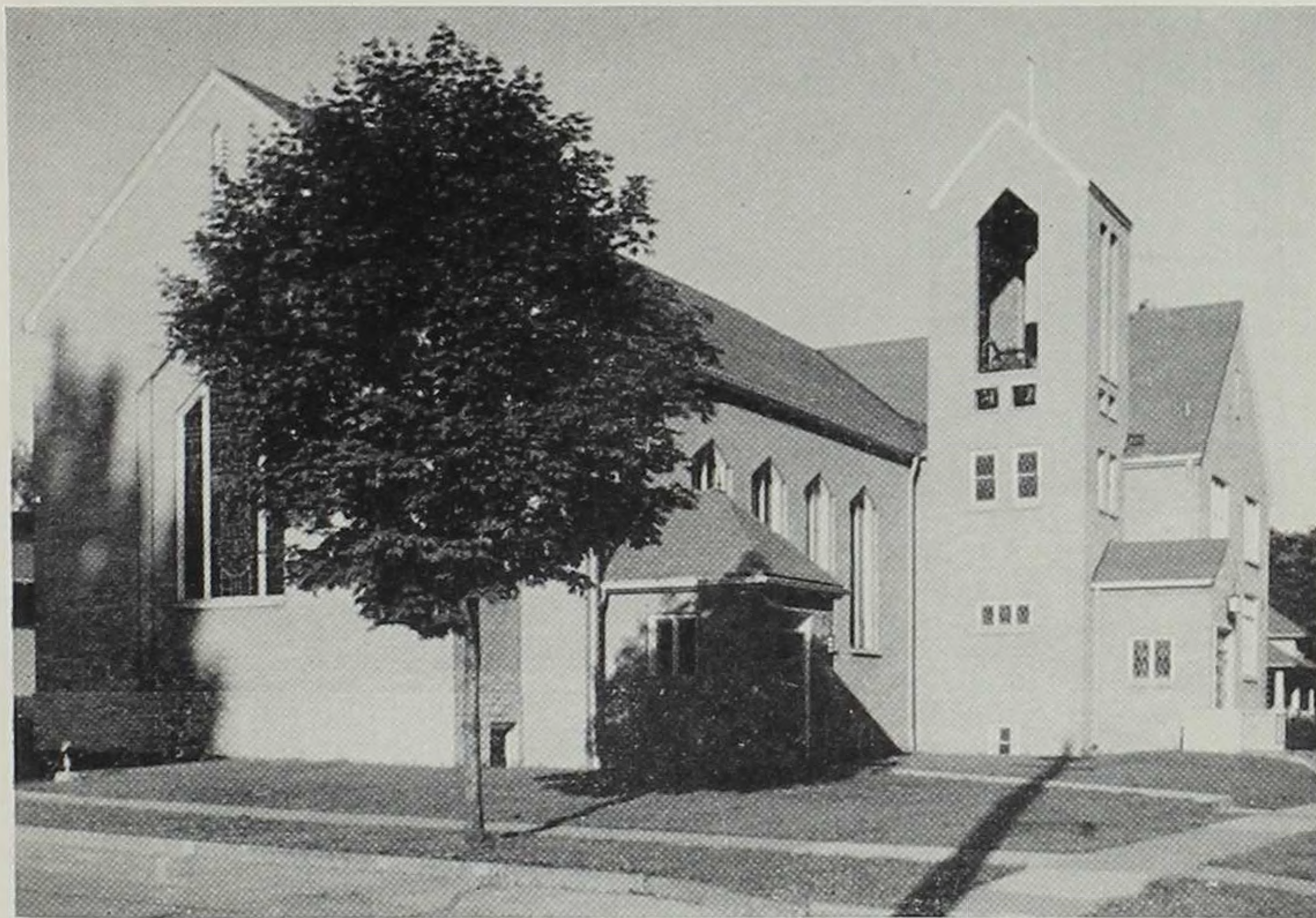


Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church, Latimer

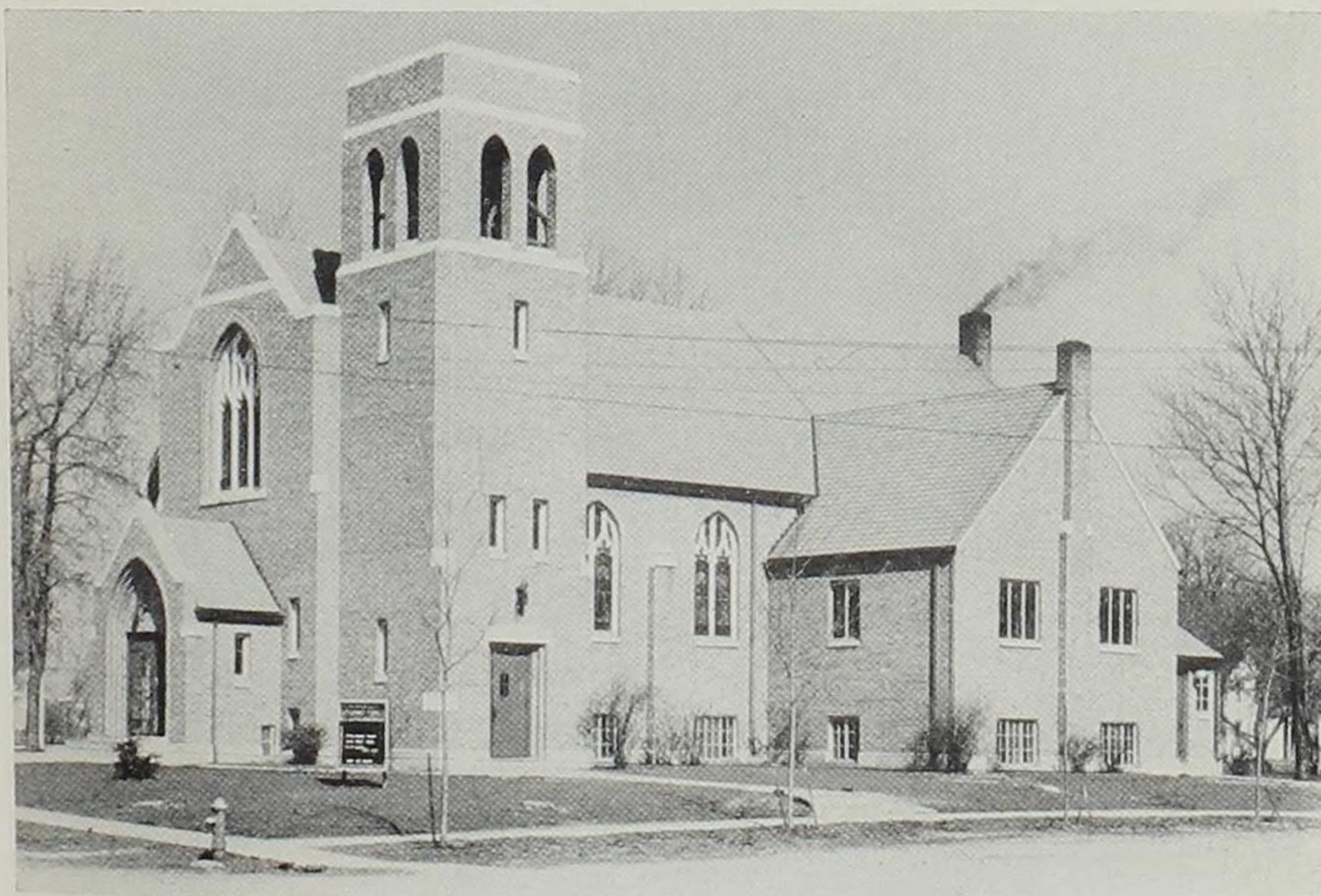


Friedens Evangelical and Reformed Church, Schleswig

SOME IOWA CHURCHES



St. Luke Evangelical and Reformed Church, Burlington



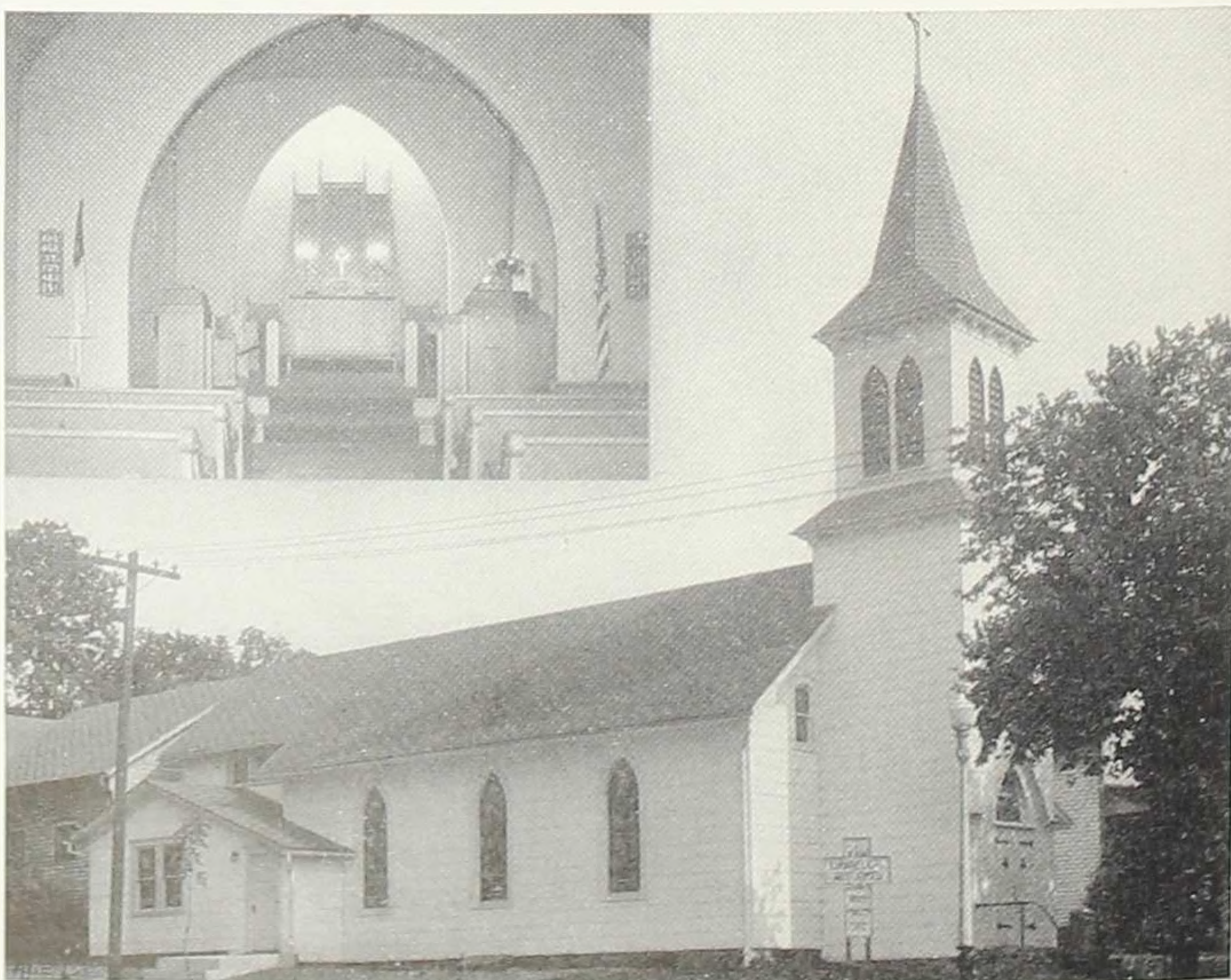
Immanuel Evangelical and Reformed Church, Klemme

THE MINISTRY OF HEALING



Evangelical Deaconess Hospital, Marshalltown

A CHURCH IN WESTERN IOWA



St. John's Evangelical and Reformed Church, Creston
Inset: Chancel of St. John's Church

of North America in 1877, but in 1925 "German" was dropped and the name then taken held until 1934. The *Kirchenverein* met as a whole until 1857, when geographical divisions were introduced. In time the Iowa pastors and charges fell into District 5; but in 1887 the name of Iowa District distinctly appears for the first time in the *Evangelischer Kalender*. By 1908 the Iowa District included 66 pastoral charges, 84 congregations, 12,764 communicant members, 4,693 pupils and 628 teachers in the Sunday Schools. According to the *Yearbook and Almanac* of the Evangelical and Reformed Church for 1935 (the first year that figures for the Merger became available), Iowa District then had 56 pastors, 12,214 members and 9,324 Sunday School pupils. During 1934, 3,107 Iowa Evangelical services were conducted in German. The total number of congregations in Iowa District was 77. Seventy were in Iowa, 4 in Illinois, 2 in Missouri, and 1 in South Dakota.

The Reformed Church

Work among the German Reformed in Iowa had been started under the Ohio Synod. On September 17, 1859, Iowa Classis was formed at Tipton with three ministers and three elders. The Rev. F. C. Bauman, pastor of the Harmony congregation (Zwingle), was elected president.

A language controversy having developed in the Church, the German-speaking element wished for separate ecclesiastical bodies, so the Synod of

the Northwest was constituted in 1867. Next came the organization in 1873 of the Ursinus Classis (German) for Iowa, consisting of eleven congregations.

Both Iowa Classis and Ursinus Classis were represented in the General Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States as well as in their own respective synods. A further realignment in 1887 brought Iowa Classis into the new Synod of the Interior, while a modern geographical regrouping took place in 1921 with the formation of the Synod of the Mid-West in which Iowa Classis then found itself. The Ursinus Classis (still German-speaking, except for the period of World War I) remained part of the Synod of the Northwest until Iowa Synod (E & R) was organized in 1939.

The Reformed group in 1934 showed the following strength: *Iowa Classis*, 12 ministers, 14 congregations, and 1,208 members; *Ursinus Classis*, 11 ministers, 13 congregations, and 2,047 members.

Thus, when the two main original bodies were merged in 1934, the "E" group in Iowa was approximately three times as large as the "R" group. But six years elapsed before the local groupings were finally remodeled as Iowa Synod.

FREDERICK I. KUHNS